

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 SSO-00 /019 W
-----031396 261709Z /70
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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4745
INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY OSLO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 02932

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ENRG, EG, US, IS
SUBJ: REPORT OF POSSIBLE CONFRONTATION AT "MEDIAN LINE"

REF: STATE 20861 (NOTAL)

1. AMOCO/EGYPT EXPLORATION MANAGER HARPER ON
JANUARY 26 PROVIDED FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL DETAILS REPORTED
REFTEL. HARPER IS ALSO SOURCE OF LANCASTER'S PRELIMINARY
INFORMATION.

2. NORWEGIAN VESSEL "GECO" IS UNDER CONTRACT TO DO NEW
SEISMIC WORK FOR GUPCO (AMOCO/EGPC OPERATOR IN GULF OF
SUEZ CONCESSIONS) IN TWO AREAS OF GULF --IN RAMADAN/JULY
FIELDS AND SOUTHERN AREA NEAR DISCOVERY IN BLOCK 382.
THIS IS GECO'S FIRST WORK IN GULF OF SUEZ. NOR-
WEGIANS HAVE DEVELOPED NEW SEISMIC TECHNIQUE AND ARE
APPLYING IT FOR GUPCO IN AREAS WHERE DISCOVERIES ALREADY
MADE. AMOCO PLANNED GECO'S SEISMIC PROGRAM SO THAT ALL
LINES TO BE RUN WOULD BE ON "WESTERN SIDE" OF GULF, ES-
PECIALLY IN AREAS WHERE AMOCO KNEW ABOUT PREVIOUS
PROBLEMS WITH ISRAELIS. AMOCO ALSO AWARE THAT BOAT WOULD
HAVE TO MAKE SWEEPING TURNS INTO ISRAELI-
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CONTROLLED AREA IN ORDER COMPLETE PROGRAM. BOTH HARPER
(WHO IS NEW TO AMOCO) AND GECO WERE UNAWARE, HOWEVER OF
REAL POSSIBILITY OF ISRAELI NAVAL INTERCEPTION. AMOCO/
EGYPT MANAGER RUBASCH NOT BRIEFED FULLY ON DETAILS OF
GECO'S SEISMIC PLAN.

3. HARPER, WHO EMPHASIZED HE STILL HAS ONLY SKETCHY

INFORMATION DUE TO RADIO COMMUNICATIONS DIFFICULTIES WITH GECO (VESSEL MUST SEND MESSAGES TO HOME OFFICE IN NORWAY, WHENCE THEY ARE RE-TRANSMITTED TO CAIRO), TOLD US BOAT WAS INTERCEPTED AFTERNOON/EVENING JANUARY 22 BY ISRAELI GUN-BOAT WHILE IN PROCESS MAKING WIDE TURN IN PURSUIT OF SEISMIC PROGRAM. GECO, WHICH CARRYING ONLY ONE AMCIT TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, IMMEDIATELY COMPLIED WITH DEMAND TO LEAVE AREA. ACCORDING MESSAGE FROM GECO CAPTAIN, VESSEL WAS INTERCEPTED FULL FIVE MILES ON EGYPTIAN SIDE OF MEDIAN AND WARNED TO LEAVE AREA, ALTHOUGH PRECISE ORDERS NOT CLEAR. AS BEST HARPER CAN DETERMINE, SHIP FINISHED NON-CONTROVERSIAL NORTH/SOUTH LINES OF PROGRAM IN NORTHERN AREA AND SET OUT JAN 23 FOR SOUTHERN AREA DESCRIBED ABOVE. SEISMIC PLAN IN THIS AREA ALSO INCLUDES TURN-AROUNDS BEYOND MIDPOINT OF GULF. VESSEL ENGAGED MAKING PREPARATIONS BEGIN SOUTHERN PORTION OF PROGRAM JAN 24 AND 25 AND EXPECTS BEGIN WORK AFTERNOON JAN 26. FULL PROGRAM WILL TAKE 3-4 DAYS. HARPER IS SENDING CABLE THROUGH NORWAY OFFICE, INSTRUCTING GECO TO SHOOT NORTH/SOUTH LINES FIRST AND TO PROCEED WITH CAUTION WHEN READY TO SHOOT EAST/WEST LINES. HARPER REITERATED NO PART OF GECO'S SEISMIC PLAN IS EAST OF MIDPOINT, BUT GECO WILL HAVE TO MAKE TURNS INTO EASTERN WATERS IN ORDER COMPLETE PROGRAM. HE ASKED FOR NO RPT NO ASSISTANCE FROM EMBASSY.

4. NEWS OF JANUARY 22 INTERCEPTION REACHED CAIRO VIA NORWAY ONLY LATE JANUARY 25; HARPER PASSED INFORMATION CONFIDENTIAL

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DIRECTLY TO HOME OFFICE.

5. COMMENT: UNFORTUNATE THAT PRESENT AMOCO-EGYPT HIERARCHY SEEMS TO BE UNAWARE OF INFORMAL MECHANISM WHICH OPERATED IN 1976 TO FORESTALL SUCH INCIDENTS AND LET AMOCO PROCEED WITH NEEDED SEISMIC WORK. THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT POLICY LEVELS IN EITHER AMOCO OR EGPC WERE AWARE OF EXACT PLANS OR FACT THAT GECO WOULD LIKELY BE INTERCEPTED. EILTS

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